Institutional Plan for Distance Education and Off-Campus Instruction

Collin County Community College District
4800 Preston Park Blvd.
Plano, Texas

Institutional Plan for Distance Education and
Off-Campus Instruction

Section I – Instructional Issues (Institutional Plan 2002.1)

Compliance

1. **The institution documents compliance with *The Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs*.**

Collin County Community College District (CCCCD) affirms compliance with *The Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs. Courses for distance learning are reviewed rigorously by the academic departments. All instructional development staff have been trained to follow these procedures in their course development practices. Additionally the Faculty Online Group which reviews all new DL courses actively follows these principles in their review work.*

2. **The distance education program is consistent with the institution's educational mission.**

    CCCCD Mission Statement:
    Collin County Community College District is a student and community-centered institution committed to developing skills, strengthening character and challenging the intellect.

    The college's distance education program is consistent with the institution's educational mission to offer higher education opportunities to students who may not be able to attend on-site classes because of family, time, physical or geographical limitations. By offering distance learning opportunities the College is able to serve underserved populations desiring to learn new skills.

3. **The institution has an assessment process for evaluating the rationale behind the proposal of complete degree and certificate programs for delivery via distance education. What are the factors that cause your institution to engage in distant certificate or program delivery (examples of relevant factors include partnership opportunities, market analysis, state incentives, faculty readiness)? Describe the assessment process.**

CCCCD has one certificate and no complete distance learning degree program. (Appendix A).

This is a pilot program for CCCCD. The decision was made to offer the courses leading to the certificate as a trial for future off-site credit programs. This certificate is currently approved by the CCCCD internal processes and the THECB. This certificate is an ongoing offering at the college. The off-site approval process was initiated by a written request from the company followed by a mutually signed contract for delivery of the course and discussions among the deans offering the course, the Vice President of Instruction, and the President at that time. All parties agreed to the trial. This process worked well for the trial and it was determined the approval process would be used in the future for off-campus face-to-face delivery.

When CCCCD does begin offering certificates/degrees via on-line format, the determining factors and internal and state approval processes currently used for on campus courses and programs will be used to accommodate distance education certificates and programs.

4. **The institution evaluates the overall effectiveness of its distance education program by assessing progress toward meeting its institutional goals. The evaluation outcomes are incorporated into the institution's overall institutional effectiveness efforts. Please summarize the process and any remedial actions taken.**

   CCCCD uses a three-year planning cycle for formulating institutional strategic goals and an annual cycle for formulating institutional and departmental operational goals (or achievement indicators as CCCCD refers to them). Using the most recently completed fiscal year as an example (see Appendix B for CCCCD's 2001-2003 strategic Goals and the operational plan, including outcomes) distance education permeates the District's strategic and operational plans. Sections in the appendix that relate specifically to distance education are highlighted in yellow. The rightmost column of the table in the appendix summarizes the outcomes of CCCCD's efforts in relationship to its goals and objectives. This information informs subsequent planning cycles so that subsequent goals and objectives can be modified as necessary based on the results of the outcomes in any given year.

5. **The institution has an officer responsible for distance learning in a position that is appropriate for the institution and the size of the distance education program.**

   CCCCD currently offers 170 courses and two certificates, but no degree via distance education or off-campus instruction.

The Vice-President of Academic Affairs is responsible for oversight of the College's distance learning initiatives. Through this office, various levels of supervision and oversight are administered. The District's Director of Transfer Programs oversees all credit programs, including distance education, for compliance with THECB course and program guidelines. Each academic dean is responsible for ensuring the quality of course offerings in their academic division. The College also has a Distance Education Coordinator who serves as a contact person for student questions about the College's distance learning program and student technical questions. The Teaching Learning Center provides instruction and support for faculty using computer-based approaches to distance education or for course development help. (Organizational Chart, Appendix C).

6. **The institution has established requirements for admissions, satisfactory student progress, and graduation requirements for distance education.**

   Requirements for admissions, student progress and graduation requirements for distance education mirror the institutions requirements for classroom-based instruction. All students are held to the same standards and requirements, regardless of the mode of instruction they receive. www.ccccd.edu/catalog.html

7. **Policies relevant to transcriptions, grading and, transfer credentials are in place.**

   Policies relevant to transcriptions, grading and, transfer credentials for distance education are in place. These are the same policies that exist for classroom based instruction. www.ccccd.edu/catalog.html

8. **The institution has a process in place to address the needs of distance learners who fall under the American With Disabilities Act.**

   Any student with a disability, including distance education students, is referred to the College's ACCESS office for screening, intake and eligibility determination. Students with disabilities are provided academic accommodations based on their documented disabilities. www.ccccd.edu/catalog.html

9. **SACS and other professional credentialing agencies have been notified, as appropriate.**

   SACS and other professional credentialing agencies have been notified, as appropriate.

   SACS mandates four thresholds at which post-secondary institutions must notify the agency in relationship to distance education. SACS expects to be notified (1) when an institution begins offering one or more instructional programs through a new delivery modality or at a new site, (2) when 25% of a program's curriculum is offered through an alternative delivery modality or at a new site, (3) when 50% of a program's curriculum is offered through an alternative delivery modality or at a new site, and (4) when 100% of a program's curriculum is offered through an alternative delivery modality or at a new site. The latter threshold is likely to result in the initiation of a SACS substantive change review process.

   In fall 1999, CCCCD reached the 50 percent threshold in that over 50% of the associate of arts and the associates of science curricula were available over the Internet for the first time. Consequently, CCCCD sent a letter, dated October 10, 1999, to the Executive Director of SACS informing the agency that the threshold had been attained. The 100% threshold has not been attained.

   Only CCCCD's allied health and public service programs have professional accreditation. None of those programs offer any distance education instruction. However, all three accrediting bodies mandate that they be notified should an institution make any major changes in their programs. The initiation of instruction through distance education would be considered a major change and should the decision be made to offer instruction in any of those programs, the accrediting agencies would be appropriately notified.

10. **The institution has sufficient financial resources to initiate and sustain quality distance learning courses and programs, and the support services that accompany them, and a process by which funding is distributed to support distance education. Please describe how the capital and operating budgets for distance education and support services are set and sufficient funds distributed.**

   Each spring, CCCCD undergoes a rigorous budget defense hearing for each department in the college. Each year, the college administration has requested additional distance learning courses to be developed at CCCCD and has provided adequate funds to pay for the additional class sections and any support services for distance education, as needed.

CCCCD pays faculty the equivalent of one 3-hour course stipend for the development of these courses and these dollars are also included in the departmental budget.

Faculty development is a major part of faculty readiness and support for distance learning courses. CCCCD provides intense faculty development through the Teaching Learning Center. With locations now at two of the three campuses and scheduled faculty appointments at the third campus, the TLC provides complete training for faculty desiring to teach and instructional support while they teach distance learning courses.

Section 2 - Educational Programs

1. **The institution has procedures in place for planning, development, approval, and review of quality distance education programs; and for meeting external accrediting bodies standards.**

   Planning:
   The College plans for distance education programs as described in section I.4. At this time, CCCCD has no complete distance education programs. The approval procedure is the same as for internal course approval which is described here.

   Development and Approval:
   The College follows the same procedures for the design, development, and approval of distance education courses/programs as it does for courses/programs offered on site. Courses and programs, which are new offerings at the institution, are reviewed by the Curriculum Advisory Board (CAB). The College has had no courses offered in the distance format that have not been taught first in an on-site format by the instructor who subsequently offers the course via distance. The courses, thus, are approved by the CAB and also undergo another approval process to be taught in the distance education format. In this process, the faculty member initiating the process, in consultation with their discipline peers and chairs, presents a proposal for a new course to the Faculty Online Group (FOG). The proposal is reviewed and approved by the discipline faculty peers, the FOG, the dean, and vice president before it can be offered to students.

Evaluation:
Each year, the Dean conducts a class visit, which include on-line courses, for faculty members. This is conducted as a part of the overall evaluation of the faculty member's teaching performance. Suggestions and recommendations are used by the Dean as a basis of informing the faculty member for needed improvements.

Distance education courses are a part of the discipline course offerings, and, as such, are evaluated with the discipline. All CCCCD programs and departments undergo rigorous assessment at least once every five years. During the course of these evaluations, the unit being evaluated is required to engage in an extensive self-evaluation of its mission, and planning and the degree to which they are accomplished, service/product delivery, intended outcomes, quality enhancement, peer comparisons, personnel, and cost effectiveness. Once the self-evaluation is completed, and external review team (external to the unit being evaluated) evaluates the information gathered during the self-evaluation, requests any addition necessary information, makes a judgment about the unit's strengths and weakness, and makes recommendations based on the weaknesses. After the external review team conducts an open hearing on its findings, the unit develops a quality enhancement plan to address the identified weaknesses. Administrators who supervise the unit have an opportunity to react to the entire process and after six to nine months the unit must submit a report summarizing the outcomes of its quality improvement efforts. Thus, distance education courses are evaluated with the discipline in this process.

During FY 2003, CCCCD's Distance Learning Office underwent its five-year evaluation. CCCCD's Distance Education Office has limited responsibility for distance education curriculum. Essentially, the distance Education Office merely handles the logistics associated with delivery of distance learning to CCCCD students. Deans and faculty members have responsibility for the quality of instruction and the selection of delivery modalities. With this understanding, the results of the evaluation (recommendations, quality enhancement plan, and administrator's comments) of the Distance Learning Office are detailed in Appendix D. Insufficient time has elapsed since the completion of the evaluation process for the report to have been submitted on the outcomes of the unit's quality improvement efforts.

External Accreditation:
The College has no distance courses/programs requiring approval by external accrediting bodies other than Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board at this time, as described in #9 above. The process for maintaining SACS and THECB standards are the same as for on-site courses since the distance

education courses are reviewed within the appropriate discipline as described in section 2.1

2. **The institution has plans/procedures for assessing student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction in its distance education programs and courses; and for using the results of the assessment to improve   courses and programs.**

   CCCCD assesses multiple aspects of student success in distance education courses.

   Course retention rates have been reviewed in an ongoing manner in distance learning courses and the data regularly compared to those in traditional courses. (See Appendix E.)

   In general, as is true at most institutions, CCCCD's course retention rates in distance learning courses are lower than in traditional courses (Appendix E). This disparity between course retention rates in distance vs. traditional courses was the primary motivation that led to a workshop that was conducted in January 2003 for distance learning faculty that focused student retention strategies in distance education courses. The workshop was entitled "Solve the Mystery: How to Retain Students Online" and was conducted by Dr. Sue Espinosa, Associate Professor of Education Technology in the Department of Secondary and Higher Education and Program Coordinator for Educational Technology at Texas A&M University at Commerce.

   Course retention rates will continue to be monitored each year and additional workshops provided to help faculty improve course completion rates in distance education as the data warrants. In addition, course completion rate data are used by deans when they conduct their annual performance evaluations with faculty. Faculty are expected to use this data to improve instruction in all courses.

   Learning outcomes are currently regularly monitored in terms of grade distributions (for example see Appendix B, for data from spring 2003). As noted in the preceding paragraph, CCCCD distance courses tend to have higher withdrawal rates than do traditional courses, but based on grade distribution it appears that the students who complete distance courses tend to perform at a slightly higher level as reflected in the higher percentage of high grades awarded. CCCCD's distance faculty also teach traditional courses and the same grading standards are being applied to distance vs. traditional courses.

CCCCD is in the process of developing recommendations for measuring student learning outcomes in the general education core curriculum. The GEOForum (General Education Outcomes) has been working for over two years to make recommendations to revise the general education core curriculum and to develop a process for measuring learning outcomes. That process has resulted in recommendations that will be implemented in fall 2004.

CCCCD administers the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory to a random selection of course sections every spring. By design, distance learning sections are included in the sample, so the information is available to compare student satisfaction in traditional vs. distance courses. That comparison has not been made in the past, but an analysis will be conducted using data from the last two years and will be shared with administrators before the end of spring 2004. In addition, this analysis will be provided on an annual basis as the survey continues to be administered each spring.

CCCCD maintains the same expectations of students and faculty in distance courses as they do in traditional courses. Thus, the only difference in procedures for assessing learning outcomes is the means used to collect assessment data. In traditional courses, for example, student satisfaction surveys are distributed and collected by faculty members. In distance courses, the questionnaires are mailed directly to the students and a postage paid return envelope is included. All instructions are otherwise identical.

Student evaluations of instruction are also administered in each course as is described more fully in Section 3.3.

3.   **Procedures are in place to evaluate all instructional materials developed by other organizations or institutions prior to use in distance education.**

The majority of distance learning classes offered are developed by CCCCD faculty. Some academic departments may offer programs developed, in part, to accompany specific course textbooks. In these cases, the course materials are evaluated by the appropriate faculty member(s), proposed and reviewed for use by the same process as other distance courses, with final approvals for adoption from the FOG, Dean and VPAA.

Dallas County Community College District telecourses are used at CCCCD by rental agreement with DCCCD. Prior to use and annually, the

faculty of the department evaluate and approve both the format and course content for courses to be offered by CCCCD.

Courses used through the Virtual College of Texas (VCT) are accepted for use based on the assurance from VCT that the 'producing' institution meets the same SACS and THECB academic requirements for quality as the 'hosting' institution that offers the course. (See Appendix F) For Spring 2004 we have 28 students enrolled in VCT courses at other institutions. Summer courses had 25 students enrolled and Fall 2003 had 51 students enrolled.

Section 3 - Faculty

1. **The qualifications for distance education faculty are the same as faculty teaching the same courses in a traditional on-campus format.**

   The qualifications for distance education faculty are the same as for faculty teaching the same courses in a traditional on campus format. The same CCCCD faculty teach distance education classes and on-site courses. Faculty must have taught the course at least one semester on campus before they are allowed to teach using any of the distance learning modalities. Faculty must demonstrate they are adequately prepared to teach on line or via video before they are allowed to actually conduct their class as described above in Section 3.1.

2. **The institution provides orientation and training for faculty involved in distance education programs.**

   Faculty orientation and preparation is available through several College departments. For faculty interested in video-based instruction, the Distance Learning Center provides one-on-one instruction on preparing instruction for video, use of graphics and organizing and presenting the video lecture. Workshops are also offered during Faculty Development Weeks, scheduled prior to each semester, or departmental workshops geared toward a specific subject matter.

   Faculty interested in course development for computer-based instruction receive professional training through the College's Teaching Learning Centers. Here the faculty member receives one-on-one training or small group workshops on developing a course using the WebCT course management system. Faculty are instructed on how to develop a Web page for their course syllabi before undertaking course development.

The TLC also provides self-instructional modules on the College's Web site for faculty who prefer learning this way. Also, faculty training for on line course development is available in CD or video (VHS) format. Workshops on these topics are also offered during formal Faculty Development Weeks as well as regularly during the semester.

3. **Procedures are in place for appropriate evaluation of faculty involved in the distance education program (such as procedures that evaluate faculty-student interaction.)**

    Evaluation of faculty teaching distance education includes three components; 1) FOG approval, as described in Section 3.1, 2) student evaluation, and 3) dean's class visit, as described in Section 2.1.

    The College asks students to evaluate each class in which they enroll each semester. This includes all distance education courses. The Institutional Research Office conducts end of course evaluations for the purpose of receiving student feedback statistics that are summarized and explained to the instructors. The IRO also analyzes distance learning students on overall student progress and retention measures.

    CCCCD has a student evaluation form for distance learning courses that is accessed by students via the World-Wide Web (see Appendix G).

    The college is in the process of designing new instruments for all instructional evaluation. The new instrument for lecture courses has been developed and was pilot tested fall 2003. The new instrument for distance learning is still under development, but it is expected to be ready for implementation by the end of FY2004. The current instrument will be used until revision.

    The new student evaluation process is being designed as a summative evaluation. Consequently, the Student Evaluation Task Force that is spearheading the effort to revise the process is also preparing to provide faculty members in all delivery modalities with recommendations and resources for undertaking their own formative evaluations.

4. **The role of faculty in development and evaluation of courses and their role in affirming adherence to the Principles of Good Practice is given.**

    Faculty teaching distance learning courses are responsible for course content and affirming the use of Principles of Good Practice.

The Faculty Online Group (FOG), consisting of experienced distance learning professors appointed by the VPAA, reviews all courses submitted for approval and ensures that the Principles were adhered to in its development.

For courses to be taught online, an approval process is in place. The process is faculty-developed and requires faculty members to describe the proposed on-line course, its components, and the methods used in the class. Faculty must demonstrate their computer skills and WebCT skills before teaching. Both of these components are reviewed and approved by departmental peers and approved by the Faculty Online Group (FOG), before review and approval by the dean and vice president. (Course approval form, Appendix H.)

5. **A policy exists that address faculty teaching load for those involved in distance education.**

The teaching load for distance learning instructors is included as a part of their regular load as any on-site course. The College currently restricts the faculty member to no more than 40% of his/her regular load taught via Distance Education. On-line classes enrollment is normally capped at 25 students due to the level of involvement the faculty member has with each student.

6. **A process exists for evaluating the credentials of faculty employed by other institutions who are teaching courses for which your institution is awarding credit.**

Faculty teaching for other institutions who offer their distance learning courses at CCCCD must possess the same qualifications as faculty who teach for CCCCD.

The only credit courses taught by non-CCCCD faculty are offered through the Virtual College of Texas. VCT assumes the responsibility of verifying the compliance with the SACS and THECB criteria by participating institutions.

7. **The institution has policies on intellectual property, faculty compensation, copyright guidelines, and the distribution of revenue (if applicable) that are appropriate for distance education.**

All faculty must follow the institution's copyright guidelines which are based on national standards of copyright recognition. Policies for the distribution of revenue for courses sold outside the institution are currently being developed. Current CCCCD policy allows for the institution to own all on-line courses in their entirety if college funds or supplies were used

for development.   Faculty members are provided with a stipend for on line course development equal to a 3-hour course. Information on the College's policy is included in the Faculty Resource Guide:

http://iws2.ccccd.edu/tlc/Info/FacultyResourceGuide0304.pdf

If accepted, the College policy provides that CCCCD retains ownership of the course. (Appendix I.)

Section 4 - Student Support Services

1. The institution provides distance learners access to appropriate student services such as admissions, registration, academic advising, remedial services, placement service, testing and assessment, orientation, computing departments, financial aid offices, counseling, and help desk/hot line.

The College provides on-line access to many student services. On-line services are available for admissions, registration, academic advising, remedial services, testing and assessment, financial aid applications and processing, scholarship applications, and counseling information and referrals. Students can access Help Desk/Hotline for technical help. Books can be purchased on-line from the College Bookstore. Students can request records such as transcripts, enrollment verifications, and access to grades on-line. Transfer information and concurrent admissions applications may also be accessed on-line. Career services and cooperative work experience information and links as well as student employment job listings are all available on-line to distance learning students. One career services on-line seminar has been developed, with others in development. For Spring 2004, online students will be able to complete academic advising and new student orientation.

 We do not have on-line placement service or orientation, but both are anticipated for 2004.

A student may access these services by going to the College's web site, www.ccccd.edu and selecting Student Services in the drop down dialogue box. At the Student services website, http://www.ccccd.edu/studentservices/students.html the distance learning student can access information and receive help on the student services on-line access. Registration can be completed on-line at http://www.ccccd.edu/register.html. Help desk/hotline help can be accessed by calling 972-881-5828 or Hdeluna@ccccd.edu or Bwilson@ccccd.edu

2. **Distance learners have access to library resources of an appropriate breadth and quality for the distance education program(s) offered.**

   The LRC web site (www.ccccd.edu/cs/lrc/lrc.html) prominently features an area set aside for distance learning services. Services include: online registration to acquire a library account, Ask-a-Librarian email reference service, on-line interlibrary loan request form, course reserves on the web, on-line catalog of library holdings, comprehensive databases covering academic disciplines, full text journal articles, and the electronic book collection.

3. **The institution described its efforts and success with mechanisms designed for student involvement in non-content-oriented learning communities (like cafes)**

   The College does not offer non-content oriented learning communities.

Section 5 - Distance Education Facilities and Support Services

1. **The institution has available the facilities and equipment necessary to deliver its distance learning courses.**

   The institution has adequate facilities and equipment necessary to deliver its distance learning courses. The institution has the necessary servers and computer infrastructure to allow for trouble-free service to students. The institution also maintains a two-way distance learning studio to transmit classes to multiple campus sites within the College district.

   The College maintains a continuous upgrade plan to allow for the latest technology enhancements to be purchased if they help improve service to our students. (See CCCCD Technology plan, http://www.ccccd.edu/it/techplan/2001_2004.pdf)

1. **Arrangements have been made for off-campus delivery of required laboratories, clinical placement sites, workshops, seminars, etc. that are associated with distance learning activities.**

   The College does not currently offer on line courses that require laboratories, workshops or seminars for course completion.

Overall Evaluation

Recommend: _____ Approval of Plan in its current form

                              _____ Approval with minor changes/additions
                                                   as noted above

                              _____ Plan requires substantial changes and
                                                   a second review.

Evaluator:

_____